Ventilation.—Volumes have been written by medical men upon the advantages of fresh air, and on the unwholesome atmosphere of crowded cities. If the air that circulates in the streets of towns and cities be impure, what must be the state of those offices or rooms where twenty or thirty persons are breathing close together during the whole of the day, and gas lights are burning during the evening? In such cases we are told that a person afflicted with consumption of the lungs may communicate the complaint to others, as they must inhale a portion of the atmosphere which he has breathed out. The air in a close office is not only rendered impure by the number of people that breathe it and by the burning of gas, but it also contains very frequently particles of dust arising from the floor, through the number of people constantly walking in and out. It is almost impossible for persons so circumstanced to enjoy for a length of time even moderate health. A portion of this evil may be mitigated by a good system of ventilation. To obtain this should be regarded as an object of the first importance. If a banker do not insist upon the architect performing this in the most effectual manner, he must be content to be often put to inconvenience through the illness and consequent absence of his clerks.

ARTISANS' HOME, &c.

The interest I feel in all that relates to the "Artisans' Home" (described and commented upon in your leader of Dec. 15), induces me to offer an idea or two as to a mode of decorating the interior of establishments of this nature, so that they might prove to be, at the same time, highly useful to all those protected under their walls, whose minds may have a tendency to artistic pursuits. In addition to the reading-room and library, but appertaining thereto, I would appropriate a well-lighted and well-ventilated room for the benefit of those individuals. Towards the upper part of the walls, and at proper distances for observation, I would place a few good casts of figures, some on revolving pedestals, their contours being relieved by a light blue coloured ground. I would also have cheap but well-executed human or other compositions or single forms, painted in *chiaro-scuro*. The lower division of the walls should be stuccoed white, with a trowelled surface (to admit of the charcoal delineations being easily effaced by a sponge), affording ample space whereon the artisan might practice, and exercise his hand and eye in drawing, whether in copying the models before him, or designing from his own fancy. The addition of this studio to the artisan's home would be a great improvement, combining with the comforts of a lodging-house the advantages of a school of design. Real, although undeveloped talent, thus exercised, would reward the operative, giving him a greater power over the materials on which he worked, and whilst it shed refinement over him and his labours, it would reflect honour upon the nation.

The task would of course be one entirely undertaken from a pure love for art, fostered by a desire on his part to raise himself to eminence. The experiment (not an expensive one) I think worth a trial, on account of the degree of emulation it might safely be predicted it would create amongst labouring men, designers of patterns, ornamentists, whom we might discover more or less belonged to the inventive race,—men, at all events, actuated with the wish not only fully to carry out, but to improve, and add a grace to, the conceptions of others,—to give satisfaction to their employers,—to deserve, by superior talents, if they cannot command, higher wages,—and to qualify themselves to become one day efficient masters and employers. F. Lush.

Public Rights and Public Health.—The "North London Anti-Enclosure and Social and Sanitary Improvement Society," are moving again in their useful work. Efforts are being made to establish "A Primrose Hill Park Library," on a respectable scale, and make other arrangements conducive to the interests of the society, which is henceforth to hold its meetings regularly on the evening of the first Monday of every month, at the Primrose Tavern, Hampstead.

Miscellanea.

Institution of Civil Engineers.—The annual general meeting of the Institution was held on Tuesday evening, December 18th (Mr. Field in the chair), when Mr. W. Cubitt, C.E., was elected president. Messrs. Brunel, Rendel, Simpson, and R. Stephenson, M.P., vice-presidents; J. F. Bateman, G. P. Bidder, J. Cubitt, J. E. Errington, J. Fowler, C. H. Gregory, J. Locke, M.P., I. R. M'Clean, C. May, and J. Miller, members; and J. Baxendale and L. Cubitt, associates of council. The report of the council, which was read, alluded to the past season of unexampled depression in the engineering world, but at the same time held out hopes of improvement, on account of the agitation of the subjects of better supplies of water and gas, the sewerage and drainage of towns, the construction of abattoirs, and other sanitary questions; whilst the improvement of canals, in their struggle with the railways for the heavy traffic, the construction and amelioration of harbours, the embanking and improving of rivers, the recovery of marsh-lands from the sea, and numerous other works, which had been neglected on account of the more attractive railways, would resume their former importance, and eventually afford ample employment for the majority of the members of the profession. Telford medals were presented to Lieut.-Colonel Harry D. Jones, R.E., Mr. R. B. Dockray, and Mr. J. T. Harrison; Council premiums of books to Messrs. J. T. Harrison and J. Richardson; and Telford premiums of books to Messrs. R. B. Grantham, T. R. Crampton, W. Brown, and C. B. Mansfield.

Rating of Exeter Hall.—An appeal against an increase of charge by the parish of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, for poor rates, from the annual rateable value of 1,500*l.* to 2,500*l.*, on the ground of the Wednesday Concert success, was heard at the Middlesex Sessions on 11th inst. Mr. Bodkin, for the appellants, stated that the proprietors of the hall were limited by their deed to the receipt of 5 per cent. on their shares, but that they had never yet reached even that. Last year the rate had been already increased, on, from 1,000*l.*, the annual rated value for seven years, to 1,500*l.*, on the ground of a little success in more frequent letting; and dread of law expense alone, he said, prevented resistance even to that increase. The rateable value has since been suddenly raised to 2,500*l.*, whereas even the *gross* revenue for the last three years had averaged only 3,382*l.*, from which must be deducted 211*l.*, on which Messrs. Daukes and Co. must pay rates. Other deductions, such as 204*l.* for gas, 150*l.* for repairs, &c., left only 2,144*l.*, from which further deductions for interest on expenditure in moveable stock, depreciations, &c., must be made, leaving 964*l.* only as the absolute rateable value. The judge decided that 2,000*l.* be the rateable value. His lordship expressed a doubt whether concerts were within the provisions of the deed of proprietorship, though education in musical science, with musical illustration, clearly was. In course of the discussion, evidence was given that the receipts had amounted in the year ending April, 1842, to 3,284*l.* odd; April, 1843, to 4,241*l.* odd; April, 1844, to 3,016*l.* odd; April, 1845, to 2,908*l.* odd; April, 1846, to 2,598*l.* odd; April, 1847, to 3,018*l.* odd; April, 1848, to 2,947*l.* odd; April, 1849, to 4,181*l.* odd.

Soho Park, Birmingham.—In your last paper you justly remark that the Soho Park "might be made one of the most beautiful places in England;" but, alas! the great idea in laying it out appears to have been ground rent, and a number of ill-built and ill-arranged houses have sprung up, very much to the disfigurement of what was once the most beautiful entrance into Birmingham. One portion, let to a man who, I understand, is subletting, is completely denuded of trees. On public points I think it but right you should have all practicable information: let this idea be my excuse. N.

*** We are quite aware that an error was committed at starting, land being let without the retention of sufficient control; but the management of this property is now placed in other hands, who appear to have made up their minds to conserve carefully the beauties of the place, and allow none but good houses to be built on the land.

Projected Works.—Advertisements have been issued for tenders by 10th January, 1850, for the rebuilding and enlargement of New Castle Church, Glamorganshire; by 5th January, 1850, for the construction of a tank, filter beds, filter tunnels, service reservoir, and other works, for the Derby Water Works Company; by a date not specified, for the erection of a small block of farm buildings near Southampton; by 29th inst., for carpenters', slaters', and bricklayers' works for St. Marylebone guardians; by 27th inst., for a supply of soft melting iron for the navy, and by same date, for 350 tons of English tough cake copper for Chatham dockyard: and by 27th inst., for the construction of buildings required for the Great Western station at Banbury, and at the minor stations on the Oxford and Rugby line of railway, also for the construction of a goods shed at Thatcham, on the Berks and Hants line—separate tenders.

Sir Marc Isambard Brunel.—This able and distinguished engineer expired on the 12th inst., at his house in St. James's-park, in the 81st year of his age. Though by birth a Frenchman, of Norman descent, his life has almost wholly been spent in England, to which he came from the United States, where he had emigrated at the height of the first French Revolution, in 1792, being Royalist in principle and in danger of his life. He was concerned in setting up the block-making machinery which has ever since been in active operation at Portsmouth for naval purposes. He was the inventor of the circular veneering saw, also still in use the same as ever. To him the manufacturing world is indebted for the elegant little machine for winding cotton thread into balls, which has so greatly extended its consumption. He invented machinery for shoemaking for the army. But the great work of the elder Brunel was the realization of the Thames Tunnel, an arduous work, with the accomplishment of which, in 1843, after nineteen years of perseverance in the midst of difficulties and reverses, his energies were literally exhausted in the advent of incipient paralysis. His work was done. He may be said to have since remained with us only to contemplate and to assure himself of the permanency of the results of his several labours. Sir M. I. Brunel will ever hold a high place amongst the engineers of England. And his genius has been long fully appreciated. During Lord Melbourne's administration he received the honour of knighthood. He was voted a vice-president of the Royal Society, a corresponding member of the Institute of France, and a vice-president of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He was also made a chevalier of the French Legion of Honour: so that he has died full of honours as of years.

Oxford Architectural Society.—At a meeting of this society, held on the 28th ult., the report was read by Mr. Portal, B.A., secretary, which stated that since the last meeting an application had been made by Mr. Floke, P.P., of Plymstock, near Plymouth, *for a design for stalls*, which he proposed to place in his chancel. A pen and ink sketch of a stall had been forwarded to him by Mr. Wilmot, secretary, and also one of the society's sheets of bench ends, by the aid of which it was hoped he would be able to carry out his plan. Surely this is a step out of the province of the society. Mr. Portal then read a paper "On the use of screens in churches."

Lead-shot Towers.—Mr. D. Smith, of New York, lead manufacturer, claims for patent the application of an ascending artificial current of air to a descending current of metal in the manufacture of leaden shot. This he proposes to effect by employing a tower shaped at top like a funnel and at bottom like a truncated cone, with an annular hollow vessel resting on a reservoir of water at the bottom. The annular pouring vessel is to be perforated with holes at top, through which an artificial current of air is to be forced up the tower by a fan or other blowing machine. The metal falls through the hollow centre of the annular vessel into the water reservoir, which is furnished with a shoot to conduct the metal to a suitable receptable. Or, the artificial current may be created by exhausting from the top of the tower, and allowing the air to flow in at bottom, in which case the hollow annular vessel will be dispensed with.

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